

**THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE
PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:**

- 5 1. A method of retrieving information from a collection of records, each record
including at least one object having at least one attribute and a corresponding value, said
method having the steps of:
- defining a search criteria associated with said object and with at least one attribute
and a corresponding value,
- 10 executing a plurality of search actions in accordance with a search criteria, said
search actions executed progressively to produce a corresponding answer set, each
subsequent search action having a different search criteria for refining said previous
answer set,
- displaying said answer set upon completion of a search action and recording said
- 15 plurality of search actions associated with each said answer set.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of actions includes a start action
wherein said start action includes the steps of:
- clearing any previous answer sets from previous search actions and any previous
- 20 search action steps,
- executing a search on said records in accordance with said at least one attribute
including said at least one corresponding value,
- displaying an answer set having records associated with said at least one attribute
including said at least one corresponding value.
- 25 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of actions includes a refine action
wherein said refine action includes the steps of:
- executing a search on a previous result in accordance with said at least one attribute
including said at least one corresponding value,

displaying a new answer set, said new answer set having records from said previous answer set result associated with said at least one attribute including said at least one corresponding value.

- 5 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of actions includes a remove search action, said method including the steps of:

executing a search action on a previous result in accordance with said at least one attribute including said at least one corresponding value,

- 10 displaying a new answer set, said new answer set having records from said previous answer set not associated with said at least one attribute including said at least one corresponding value.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of actions includes a undo action, said method including the steps of:

- 15 reversing a last performed search action on a previous answer set, and displaying a previous answer set.

- 20 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the said attributes and answer set includes text, integers, real numbers, Boolean values, currency, dates, hyperlinks, images, sound and video.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one value includes a data-type, and each of said attributes is associated with a data-type.

- 25 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the method includes the further steps of validating said value associated with said each of said attributes.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said displayed answer set includes a partial records matching said search criteria.

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10. The method of claim 1, wherein said displayed answer set is a partial answer set

matching said search criteria.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said corresponding attribute value is a fixed value.

5 12. The method of claim 1, wherein said corresponding attribute value is a range of values.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein said attribute value is a specified as a wildcard select plurality of values with a single specification.

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14. The method of claim 1, wherein said plurality of attributes is identified by a common title.

15 15. The method of claim 1, wherein said search criteria includes a comparison operator such as "IS", "IS NOT", "IS SPECIFIED", "IS NOT SPECIFIED" and "WAS EVER".

16. The method of claim 1, wherein said method includes a user interface having a selectable list of attributes, an input area for entering at least one value including a range
20 of values, a plurality of controls associated with said search actions, a selector to select said search actions, a viewer to view said answer set and said search actions.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of defining a search criteria includes a voice recognition engine for input of said search criteria and control of said search actions.

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18. The method of claim 1, wherein said answer set is displayed after each search action.

19. A method of retrieving information from a database having a plurality of records, each record having objects associated with at least one attribute and a corresponding
30 attribute value, the method having the steps of:

performing a plurality of single step query search actions,

allowing input of new search attributes and values subsequent to each of said steps,

displaying an answer set subsequent to the execution of each said steps and recording each of said steps in a list, and

5 allowing reversal of a last action in said recorded list to present an answer set prior to said last action.

20. A method of retrieving information from a collection of records, said method having the steps of:

10 (a) associating each of said records with at least one attribute having at least one corresponding value,

(b) initiating a first search action in accordance with a first search criteria by choosing said at least one attribute including said at least one corresponding value,

(c) creating a first answer set corresponding to said first search action,

15 (d) displaying said first answer set,

(e) initiating a second search action in accordance with a second search criteria by adding said at least one attribute including said at least one corresponding value to said answer set from step (b),

(f) creating a second answer set corresponding to said second search action,

20 (g) displaying said second answer set,

(h) initiating a third search action in accordance with a third search criteria by selecting said at least one attribute including said at least one corresponding value from said answer set from steps (e) or (b),

(i) creating a third answer set corresponding to said third search action,

25 (j) displaying said third answer set,

(k) initiating a fourth search action in accordance with a fourth search criteria by selecting said at least one attribute including said at least one corresponding value to remove from any of said answer sets from steps (b), (e) or (h),

(l) creating a fourth answer set corresponding to said third search action,

30 (m) displaying said fourth answer set,

(n) allowing a reversal of any action provided there is a prior action to reverse so that the answer set prior to said last action is presented,

wherein each search action is recorded and available for inspection and said search steps and search actions are characterized in being unlimited in number.

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21. A system for retrieving information from a collection of records associated with at least one attribute and at least one corresponding attribute value, said system having:

a user interface for defining a search criteria associated with said records and with at least one attribute and a corresponding value, and said search criteria associated a

10 plurality of search actions progressive execution to produce a corresponding answer set, each subsequent search action having a different search criteria for refining said previous answer set, said user interface having:

a selectable list of attributes associated with said records,

15 an input area for entering at least one value including a range of values associated with said attributes,

a selector for selecting said search actions and a display to display said answer set and said search actions.

22. A system for retrieving information from a collection of records associated with at least one attribute and at least one corresponding attribute value, said system having:

20 a computer readable medium for storing a program associated with a set of instructions for a plurality of search actions,

said computer readable medium including:

25 a set of instructions for performing a plurality of single step query search actions,

a set of instructions for allowing input of new search attributes and values upon completion of said search actions,

30 an instruction set for displaying an answer set upon completion of said search actions and an instruction set for recording said search actions as a list of steps, and

an instruction set for allowing reversal of a last search action in said
recorded list to present an answer set prior to said last action.

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